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SUBJECT: OSCE/PERMANENT COUNCIL: STATEMENT ON UZBEK
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

¶1. Post is authorized to make the following statement at the
January 17, 2008 meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council:

Begin Text:

Mr. Chairman,

The United States is concerned about the conduct of the Uzbek
presidential election on December 23rd, which, according to
ODIHR, fell short of meeting international standards.

The United States notes Uzbekistan's inclusion of a number
of domestic and international election monitoring teams.
ODIHR was invited to field an observation mission, which is
an important commitment of OSCE States. However, we would
have been more encouraged if Uzbekistan had adhered to its
initial unconditional invitation for an observation mission.
The late issuance of visas for the needs assessment mission
and the restrictions placed on the number of observers
hindered ODIHR's ability to conduct a systematic observation
on election day. All OSCE States have made commitments to
each other regarding election observation missions, including
permitting an enhanced role for ODIHR to observe the
elections process before, during, and after election day. We
look forward to ODIHR's final report.

We share the concerns outlined in ODIHR's initial findings,
as expressed in its December 24th statement, which presented
a credible judgment that the election fundamentally did not
advance opportunities for genuine debate or empower civil
society. Tight media controls and onerous registration
requirements ensured that there were no true opposition
candidates.

It is nonetheless clear that President Karimov will remain in
office, and we in the OSCE should now turn our attention to
what happens in Uzbekistan following the elections. Those
who are genuinely interested in advancing the cause of
political reform and human rights in Uzbekistan should now
redouble their efforts to pursue these objectives. We would
like to engage the Uzbek authorities on a number of programs
beneficial to Uzbekistan and the region. Specifically, the
GOU must take concrete, verifiable steps to halt the use of
torture against detainees, secure the release of prisoners of
conscience, and allow for non-governmental organizations and
the media to operate more freely.

Mr. Chairman, we count on the Uzbek authorities to take such
steps on these issues, and believe the OSCE should play an
important role in advancing this endeavor. The United States
stands ready to support the government in its efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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